Trade Center Bombing of Release 2003/01/17 WORLD TRADE CENTER BOMBING SUSPECTS eek 'Clarity of Motive'

o Ryder employees, had arrived ck up the van in a red GM sedan accompanied by a companion. er officials said that roughly two s after the explosion, Salameh ared at the office and claimed van had been stolen the night re. He asked for his \$400 damdeposit, but was told he must file a police report.

lameh's name was already in the s files. In 1990 he had demoned publicly on behalf of El-Sav-Yosair, an Islamic firebrand who been charged with, and acquitted he 1991 slaying of Jewish Dee League founder Meir Kahane. meh had visited Nosair at the prison in Attica, N.Y., where he serving a sentence on lesser

alameh gave investigators a parar suspect to consider, and, as ortant, drew their attention to a up of activists who orbited ugh the larger Islamic commuin New York and New Jersey attended the Abu Bakr mosque Brooklyn and the Al-Salam que in Jersey City. Rahman had iched at both mosques.

he FBI had not previously conred these activists to be terrormerely passionate militants. Yet FBI had access to intelligence rmation about them gathered as esult of at least three occures: the prosecution of Nosair: emergence of Rahman as a presin the New Jersey-New York mic community; and the 1991 der of Mustafa Shalabi.

he Nosair trial was a watershed it among Middle Eastern milis in New York. Kahane, a hero to y Jewish radicals, was viewed as mbol of Zionist oppression to Isic radicals. During the trial, the groups staged demonstrations. on opposite sides of the courtment blames the Islamic Group for a series of bombings and murders, most especially the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

Egyptian security forces are engaged in a massive, nationwide crackdown aimed at fundamentalist militants, including members of the Islamic Group. The government has iailed 700 suspected extremists in response to a wave of violence that has left nearly 150 people dead, at the hands of either police or extrem-

Before he emigrated to the United States, Rahman was acquitted of involvement in Sadat's death, but an FBI intelligence briefing during the Persian Gulf War persuaded at least one senior official to believe that he posed a potentially serious threat from his new base in New Jersey.

When Rahman arrived in the United States. Shalabi found him a residence. Thereafter, they raised funds for the Afghan resistance, but ultimately had a falling out, according to published statements by several associates. In March 1991, Shalabi was found dead in his Brooklyn home. shot and knifed. There have been no arrests.

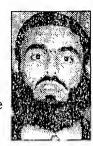
In addition, five months before the trade center bombing, about 20 members of the two mosques who attended Nosair's trial or visited him at Attica were subpoenaed by a federal grand jury, according to the New York Times. Ahmed A. Satta, a postal worker, told the Times that FBI agents grilled him about Nosair. Shalabi and Rahman.

To officials, then, the circumstantial clues being gathered by agents in New Jersey seemed to fit into a larger context. For example, Salameh's New York state driAppinion and Isourd Release 2003/01/210/10/06/A4RDP96 his residence as 57 Prospect Park. S.W. Brooklyn-the home of Ihrahim

ix suspects have been charged in connection with the World Trade Center bombing. Four were jointly indicted in the bombing and remain in custody. One is being held on obstruction charges and the sixth reportedly has fled the country.

MOHAMMAD SALAMEH, 25 Jordanian. Jersey City, N.J., handyman arrested March 4. Indicted in the

bombing.



NIDAL AYYAD, 25 Kuwaiti. Maplewood, N.J., chemical engineer arrested March 10. Indicted in the bombing.

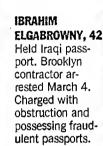


MAHMUD ABOUHALIMA, 33 Egyptian. Woodbridge, N.J., cab driver arrested in Egypt and brought to the U.S. March 24. Indicted in the bombing.



BILAL ALKAISI, 26 Jordanian. New York area resident arrested March 25. Charged with aiding and abetting the bombing.

SOURCE: News services and staff reports





RAMZI AHMED YOUSEF, 25 Jersey City, N.J., resident who reportedly fled the country. Indicted in the bombing.



-Compiled by Barbara J. Saffir

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office, agents arrested him. In his pockets, they found the business card of Nidal Ayyad, 25, a chemical engi-

Eventually, the FBI executed at least 10 search warrants in New Jer-

Agents found evidence connecting Salameh to a rental unit at the Space Station Storage facility in Jersey City. Employees identified Salameh as the man who rented a shed in November under the name "Kamal Ibraham."

Upon searching this unit March 5. agents discovered several hundred pounds of chemicals that, if properly combined and triggered with a small explosive, could produce a powerful blast. They also discovered that the chemicals—hundreds of pounds of urea and nitric acid—were purchased in November by "Kamal Ibraham."

FBI that the day before the bombing they saw a man they believe was

Ayyad's office phone. Agents learned that Salameh and Ayyad had a joint account at a local bank. They discovered that on Feb. 15 Avyad had rented from National Car Rental the same type of car that Salameh arrived in at the Ryder van rental office. Moreover, "Salameh" was listed as an additional driver on the rental car. A witness from the Ryder office identified Ayyad as the same man who accompanied Salameh when he rented the van.

On March 10 agents descended on Ayyad's first-floor apartment at 60 Boyden Ave., Maplewood, N.J. Inside, they found what a prosecutor later described as a modified timing mechanism that an explosives expert described as a time delay firing system. Avvad was carrying an Amer-

ican Express card in the name of Bilal Alkiasi. At least one witness told the -**QQ789R003990240005**59accompanied Salameh to the storage shed "on several occasions."

purported involvement with the Afghan resistance. Associates said Abouhalima traveled to Pakistan for military training and that he was a follower of Rahman and sometimes served as his driver. Rahman has disputed this claim and publicly denounced the bombing.)

Aside from these characterizations of Abouhalima—which will likely be contested in court—there has been no public disclosure of what direct evidence, if any, connects him to the bombing. He was eventually returned to New York. U.S. officials have refused to discuss their knowledge of the arrest or treatment of Abouhalima.

For weeks, the trade center bombing was an incomplete act of terrors ism because it lacked a political mesisage. But on March 28 the New York Times published a letter it received four days after the bombing. The Times quoted a law enforcement course who said there was "incontro-